

LINUS PAULING'S REHAB

THEY CALLED HIM CRAZY. But after 22 years of promoting vitamin C,

two-time Nobel laureate Linus Pauling, 91, can feel a little bit vindicated. The vitamin may add years to life after all, according to an analysis this May by UCLA epidemiologist James Enstrom.

Enstrom looked at data from a ten-year survey on the nutrition and health of more than 11,000 Americans. He found that men who got at least 300 milligrams of vitamin C a day from a com-

bination of diet and vitamin supplements lived up to six years longer than those who averaged just 25 mg from their diet alone (25 mg is the amount contained in a third of an orange). In women, who have longer life spans anyway, the effects were less noticeable: consumers of high doses of C lived an extra year.

Pauling argues that humans should load up on vitamin C because they are among the few animals that can't make their own supply. The recommended 60 mg per day for adults—set by the National Academy of Sciences to prevent vitamin-deficiency diseases such as scurvy and beriberi—isn't nearly enough, in his opinion, and more is needed for optimal health. His case rests on the fact that vitamin C is an antioxidant, a substance

*Linus Pauling
takes vitamin C in doses equivalent
to 240 oranges a day.*

that scours the body for unstable oxygen molecules called free radicals, which can cause cell damage and may play a role in diseases as varied as cancer and atherosclerosis.

For adults Pauling recommends a daily dose of 2,000 to 18,000 mg. (Too high a starting dose can cause diarrhea.) He consumes the max, the equivalent of more than 240 oranges a day. Still, many nutrition researchers have questions. Could Enstrom's vitamin takers have lived longer because they were more health conscious in general—more likely to exercise, less likely to smoke? If the body absorbs only several hundred milligrams of vitamin C a day and excretes the rest, are megadoses really of value? But Pauling claims that scientists outside the fuddy-duddy nutrition field are more receptive: "My colleagues say, 'Well, Linus has been right so often in the past that he's probably right on this too.'" —*Beth Ann Meehan*